

## How to Avoid and Overcome Client Communication Pitfalls



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## effective communications

Successful communication requires that someone (the sender) shares information and that someone else (the receiver) gets the message and correctly interprets it. The full communication loop is only successful when the sender can confirm that the receiver understood the message as intended.

It sounds simple enough. In reality, many things can prevent successful communication, not the least of which is a different communication style. There are a number of different constructs describing various communication styles. Let's explore one of the most common—communication styles.



## effective communications

Based on the behavioral grid model depicted here, there are four main communication styles.

- Interpersonal, also called the Relator
- Affective, also called the Socializer
- Cognitive, also called the Thinker
- Behavioral, also called the Director

Relator (Interpersonal): The Relator is relationship orientated and readily expresses their thoughts and feelings. However, Relator's are generally slower paced and security conscious, so they prefer less intrusive interactions.

Socializer (Affective): The Socializer prefers to interact with others rather than work alone. Socializers have a fast paced, aggressive communication style and generally work well with others.

Thinker (Cognitive): The Thinker has a closed, personal style and is analytical in their approach. Thinkers take a while to feel comfortable with others, and tend to take longer to reveal information about themselves.

Director: (Behavioural): The Director has an aggressive, competitive nature and is very independent. Directors are results orientated and focus less on the people impacts.

*activity | which communication style best fits you? why?*

## effective communications

There are four predominant communication styles, so most of the people we interact with at work are likely to have a different communication style from our own. Avoiding derailed communication at work (and being recognized as a highly promotable, excellent communicator!) means understanding and learning to interact effectively with all four styles. Here are some tips for communicating successfully with each style.

<b>to connect most effectively with a Relator</b>	<b>to connect most effectively with a Socializer</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Use less intense eye contact</li><li>Speak in a moderate pace with a softer voice and moderate tone</li><li>Seek their opinions and ideas: then listen</li><li>Try not to counter their ideas with logical arguments</li><li>Allow time for them to make a decision to reduce pressure</li><li>Encourage them to express their concerns without getting upset with them</li><li>Aim for mutual agreement on work goals and completion dates</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Make direct eye contact</li><li>Speak in an energetic and fast paced manner</li><li>Support your ideas with the opinions of people they respect</li><li>Confirm any agreements made; follow up with a brief “to do” list so they remember what they agreed to do</li><li>Allow some socializing time in meetings</li><li>Talk about experiences, people, opinions and facts</li><li>Ask about their “gut” feel</li><li>Maintain balance between fun and achieving results</li></ul>
<b>to connect most effectively with a Thinker</b>	<b>to connect most effectively with a Director</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Be more formal in your speech and manner</li><li>Don't speak in a loud or fast paced voice</li><li>Present the pros and cons of an idea along with options</li><li>Follow up in writing</li><li>Be punctual</li><li>Present information in an organized, planned, comprehensive manner</li><li>Accept that options requiring risk-taking are generally not welcomed</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Get to the point quickly in a clear and succinct manner</li><li>Speak in a fast pace</li><li>Be specific and don't over-explain or repeat yourself</li><li>Make direct eye contact</li><li>Minimize small talk</li><li>Be organized and well prepared</li><li>Focus on results to be achieved</li><li>Be punctual and stick to guidelines</li></ul>

## effective communications

activity | how can you use these tips for improving communications with internal resources?

connect with a Relator	connect with a Socializer
connect with a Thinker	connect with a Director

## effective communication

a few ideas for effectively communicating with clients and others within your firm

### how to build strong working relationships with effective communication

Effective communication strategies can help you build strong working relationships with clients and customers, team members, managers, and internal customers. Use the tips in the following list:

- Respond to requests by emphasizing what you can do to help meet them.
- Follow through and do what you say you'll do.
- Listen without passing judgment and don't rush in to give advice.
- When you have concerns, work them out with the source, not with others.
- Communicate with respect in every interaction regardless of whether you like the person.
- When others give you assistance or support, express appreciation for it.
- Focus on issues, not personalities, when you discuss work matters and problems.
- When differences in views or ideas occur, work first to understand them from the other person's perspective.
- Be direct and sincere as normal practices.
- Use humor in good taste.

### ten ways to listen as part of communicating effectively

Communicating effectively involves not only speaking well, but listening well, too. Active listening tools, such as those in the following list, help you hold up your end of a successful conversation or discussion.

- Concentrate on what the speaker has to say.
- Listen for content and emotion to understand the entire message.
- Maintain steady eye contact so speakers know your attention is with them.
- Reflect back with verbal feedback to confirm your understanding of the message.
- Stay patient when people talk to you.
- Keep your tone sincere and nonjudgmental when you listen.
- When you give feedback to check understanding, do so in one sentence.
- Tune into how the message is being said, not just what the words are.
- Acknowledge feelings that are important to the message you're hearing.
- Make your goal in conversations to show understanding of what the speaker truly means.

## effective communication

a few ideas for effectively communicating with clients and others within your firm

### pitfalls to avoid in workplace communications

Effective communications includes choosing the proper method to communicate, the right time, and the relevant message. The pitfalls in the following list are ones to avoid:

- **Using email to express concerns.** Instead, go to the source to work out problems in person.
- **Talking too much in sales situations.** Instead, learn to understand the customer's needs and then speak to indicate how you can help meet those needs.
- **Responding to requests by immediately saying it can't be done.** Instead, emphasize what you can do and when you can meet the request.
- **Providing your employees, if you are a manager, with opinionated criticism when their performance needs improvement.** Instead, provide employees with specific performance focused feedback based on your observations.
- **Saying yes when you really don't mean it.** Instead, express your concerns constructively and offer alternatives as to what you think will work better in the situation.
- **Sitting by quietly and passively when people discuss issues with you.** Instead, interact with the message you're hearing and provide verbal feedback to check your understanding of the message.
- **Dwelling on what's wrong or who's at fault when dealing with problem situations.** Instead, put your focus on working out solutions with others and on how to make the situation better.
- **Focusing on yourself — what you like and don't like — as you receive others' messages.** Instead, shift your focus from yourself to concentrating on your speaker's message and work to understand what that message means without passing judgment on it.
- **Attempting to soften a point when addressing tough or sensitive issues.** Instead, be direct, constructive, and straightforward so that your message and its importance come across clearly and respectfully.
- **Pushing forward with your idea and disregarding concerns that people have with it.** Instead, listen to and acknowledge the concerns and address them. Sometimes the best way to gain support for an idea about which others have reservations is to show that you hear those concerns.

## Top 10 qualities of an effective team player

If you were choosing team members for a business team in your organization, who would the best team players be? Assuming that people have the right technical skills for the work to be done, what other factors would you use to select your team members? Teams need strong team players to perform well. But what defines such people?

<b>1. demonstrates reliability</b>	<b>2. communicates constructively</b>
You can count on a reliable team member who gets work done and does his fair share to work hard and meet commitments. He or she follows through on assignments. Consistency is key. You can count on him or her to deliver good performance all the time, not just some of the time.	Teams need people who speak up and express their thoughts and ideas clearly, directly, honestly, and with respect for others and for the work of the team. That's what it means to communicate constructively. Such a team member does not shy away from making a point but makes it in the best way possible — in a positive, confident, and respectful manner.
<b>3. listens actively</b>	<b>4. functions as an active participant</b>
Good listeners are essential for teams to function effectively. Teams need team players who can absorb, understand, and consider ideas and points of view from other people without debating and arguing every point. Such a team member also can receive criticism without reacting defensively. Most important, for effective communication and problem solving, team members need the discipline to listen first and speak second so that meaningful dialogue results.	Good team players are active participants. They come prepared for team meetings and listen and speak up in discussions. They're fully engaged in the work of the team and do not sit passively on the sidelines. Team members who function as active participants take the initiative to help make things happen, and they volunteer for assignments. Their whole approach is can-do: "What contribution can I make to help the team achieve success?"



<p><b>5. shares openly and willingly</b></p>	<p><b>6. cooperates and pitches in to help</b></p>
<p>Good team players share. They're willing to share information, knowledge, and experience. They take the initiative to keep other team members informed.</p> <p>Much of the communication within teams takes place informally. Beyond discussion at organized meetings, team members need to feel comfortable talking with one another and passing along important news and information day to day.</p> <p>Good team players are active in this informal sharing. They keep other team members in the loop with information and expertise that helps get the job done and prevents surprises.</p>	<p>Cooperation is the act of working with others and acting together to accomplish a job. Effective team players work this way by second nature.</p> <p>Good team players, despite differences they may have with other team members concerning style and perspective, figure out ways to work together to solve problems and get work done. They respond to requests for assistance and take the initiative to offer help.</p>
<p><b>7. exhibits flexibility</b></p>	<p><b>8. shows commitment to the team</b></p>
<p>Teams often deal with changing conditions — and often create changes themselves. Good team players roll with the punches; they adapt to ever-changing situations. They don't complain or get stressed out because something new is being tried or some new direction is being set.</p> <p>In addition, a flexible team member can consider different points of views and compromise when needed. He or she doesn't hold rigidly to a point of view and argue it to death, especially when the team needs to move forward to make a decision or get something done. Strong team players are firm in their thoughts yet open to what others have to offer — flexibility at its best.</p>	<p>Strong team players care about their work, the team, and the team's work. They show up every day with this care and commitment up front. They want to give a good effort, and they want other team members to do the same.</p>

## 9. works as a problem-solver

Teams, of course, deal with problems. Sometimes, it appears, that's the whole reason why a team is created — to address problems. Good team players are willing to deal with all kinds of problems in a solutions-oriented manner. They're problem solvers, not problem dwellers, problem blamers, or problem avoiders.

They don't simply rehash a problem the way problem dwellers do. They don't look for others to fault, as the blamers do. And they don't put off dealing with issues, the way avoiders do.

Team players get problems out in the open for discussion and then collaborate with others to find solutions and form action plans.

## 10. treats others in a respectful and supportive manner

Team players treat fellow team members with courtesy and consideration — not just some of the time but consistently. In addition, they show understanding and the appropriate support of other team members to help get the job done. They don't place conditions on when they'll provide assistance, when they'll choose to listen, and when they'll share information. Good team players also have a sense of humor and know how to have fun (and all teams can use a bit of both), but they don't have fun at someone else's expense. Quite simply, effective team players deal with other people in a professional manner.

Team players who show commitment don't come in any particular style or personality. They don't need to be rah-rah, cheerleader types. In fact, they may even be soft-spoken, but they aren't passive. They care about what the team is doing and they contribute to its success — without needing a push.

Team players with commitment look beyond their own piece of the work and care about the team's overall work. In the end, their commitment is about winning — not in the sports sense of beating your opponent but about seeing the team succeed and knowing they have contributed to this success. Winning as a team is one of the great motivators of employee performance. Good team players have and show this motivation.

## building relationships, teamwork

activity | how can you create an effective team using these ten qualities?

demonstrates reliability	communicates constructively
listens actively	functions as an active participant
shares openly and willingly	cooperates and pitches in to help
exhibits flexibility	shows commitment to the team
works as a problem-solver	treats others in a respectful and supportive manner



# C\*Connect

core\*client\*community\*communications

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Driven by a passion for coaching and helping others identify and maximize your unique talents and expertise, Donna launched C\*Connect in January 2013 to work with firms across the US -- small, medium, and large -- to facilitate market research, make connections, build chemistry, and coach sales and marketing teams.

Donna has over twenty-five years of experience marketing professional services, with concentration on management and direction of marketing and business development activities. An accomplished professional working in the architectural, engineering, and construction industry, she has helped to shape visions, develop strategies, position for growth, and connect with clients and the community where you work and live.

Donna achieved the designation of Certified Professional Services Marketer (CPSM) through the Society for Marketing Professional Services (SMPS) in 1993 and elevated to the status of Fellow of the Society in 2004. Active since 1987 on local and national levels, Donna served as SMPS National President in 2007-2008.

#### resources:

How to Ask a Stranger for a Favor, [www.businesswritingblog.com](http://www.businesswritingblog.com)

How to Ask People for Things Via Email: An 8-Step Program – 99U, [99u.com](http://99u.com)

Communicating Effectively for Dummies, [www.dummies.com](http://www.dummies.com)

How to Communicate Employee Expectations Effectively, [www.inc.com](http://www.inc.com)

Ten Qualities of an Effective Team Player, [www.dummies.com](http://www.dummies.com)

Understanding Communication Styles in the Workplace, [tribhr.com](http://tribhr.com)